

Shifting the Dates of WSF 2006 Karachi for 2 months

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Dear friends

A joint meeting of National Steering Committee (NSC) of Pakistan Social Forum and Organizing Committee (OC) of WSF 2006 Karachi was held on November 19, 2005 in Lahore. The meeting was attended by more than 100 members of both NSC and OC. The meeting took a comprehensive stock of the level of preparations for WSF2006 Karachi. All the district and provincial chapters, tasks groups and member organizations presented reports on their preparations for the WSF2006. The members shown general satisfaction on the progress in difficult circumstances and conditions. A comprehensive report on the logistic arrangements in Karachi was also given to the members. The meeting was informed that the WSF Karachi secretariat is now functioning full time and all the task groups are holding their regular meetings. A comprehensive review of the progress by all the working groups was held in Karachi recently that showed satisfactory progress in many areas.. The meeting was also informed that till November 15th about 238 events have been registered for WSF Karachi and the number is increasing and as the deadline for event registration has extended till November 30th so the numbers will be much higher.

The meeting however noted the gaps in mobilization, fund raising and voluntary contributions from members due to earth quake and engagements of most of the volunteers, member organizations in the relief and rehabilitation work in earth quake affected areas. The meeting was also informed that the financial commitments from different donors (both individual and organizations) in the pre-quake phase have also reduced due to the fact that most of these funds are now being channeled to relief and rehabilitation work.

The meeting also showed its deepest concerns on the wide scale devastations mainly in Kashmir and NWFP areas due to recent earth quake and resolved to continue its political, financial and moral support to the survivors. While committing to continue its fullest support in all forms and manifestation. The meeting also shown its deepest apprehensions on the misuse of aid for disaster victims/survivors primarily by the military regime. Roles of parliament, Kashmir and NWFP governments are completely bypassed and the military has taken over the entire relief and rehabilitation operations. It is also noted that funds are being misused without any public or political accountability and the situation will further aggravate in the future as all rehabilitation work is being done without parliamentary approval or public transparency. The meeting also confirmed its resolve to critically watch and monitor the aid coming for the rehabilitation and guard against the military take over of the entire area and further militarizing the occupied land.

The meeting also reviewed the recommendations of various consultations held in post-earth quake phase. All these meetings suggested PSF to play active role in highlighting issues of aid transparency, state accountability in disaster management and mitigation and other linked issues and including these issues in the WSF program. These consultations however suggested to shift the dates of the WSF Karachi owing to the current involvement of its members in the relief and rehabilitation work in earth quake affected areas and other factors linked to funds, visa, mobilization and regional gaps in regional consultations and planning.

The meeting after considering all the factors and level of preparations for the WSF Karachi and recommendations of coordination committee of OC of WSF Karachi concluded to shift the dates of WSF Karachi for atleast two months. The new dates, however, will be announced after consulting Asian Council and IC of WSF. The meeting also decided that the issue of disaster and role of state, global forces, aid, trade and debt should also form focus of our discussion these days. A two-day Pakistan Social Forum will be organized on January 23-24, 2006 in Lahore to highlight these issues. The forum will primarily be a Pakistan Forum but international delegates will also be invited to show solidarity with the survivors of earth quake. Lahore committee was asked to present a comprehensive plan for Pakistan Forum January 2006. It was also concluded that WSF Karachi should not be delayed for more than 2 months.

In the meantime the Organizing Secretariat of WSF will continue dialogue with the Asian council and IC to announce new dates for the Polycentric WSF2006 Karachi. The meeting decided that the venue of WSF2006 will remain in Karachi and that the present committees, subcommittees and secretariat will continue functioning for organizing the event on new dates. Moreover the members resolved to continue their current efforts of mobilization, event registration and other essential debates to keep the current momentum intact and without any break or gap. The members also showed their fullest commitment to the process of WSF and its charter of principle.

The meeting also decided to form a task committee to help PSF contribute in the current relief and rehabilitation work especially in setting up new settlements with the assistance of member organizations and other supporters. Following members volunteered to be in the task committee:

- Sayeda Diep
- Nasreen Awan
- Teimur Rehman
- Khalid
- Saqib
- Mehar Safdar
- Tariq
- Mahwish Shaukat

The committee will give a comprehensive strategy for fund raising to PSF and will help undertake the ideas discussed in the meeting.

Reported by:

Irfan Mufti
Secretary
Paksitan Social Forum

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